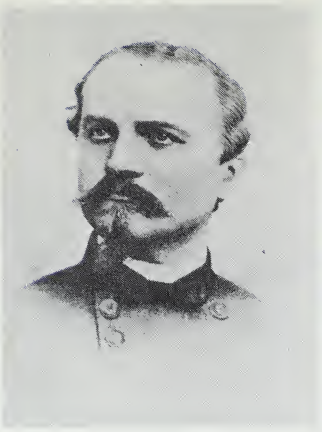
The Battle at Droop Mountain



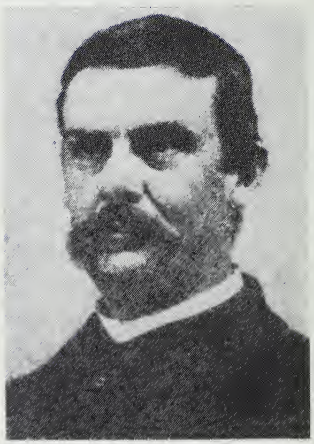
General William Averell

The North

The Leaders

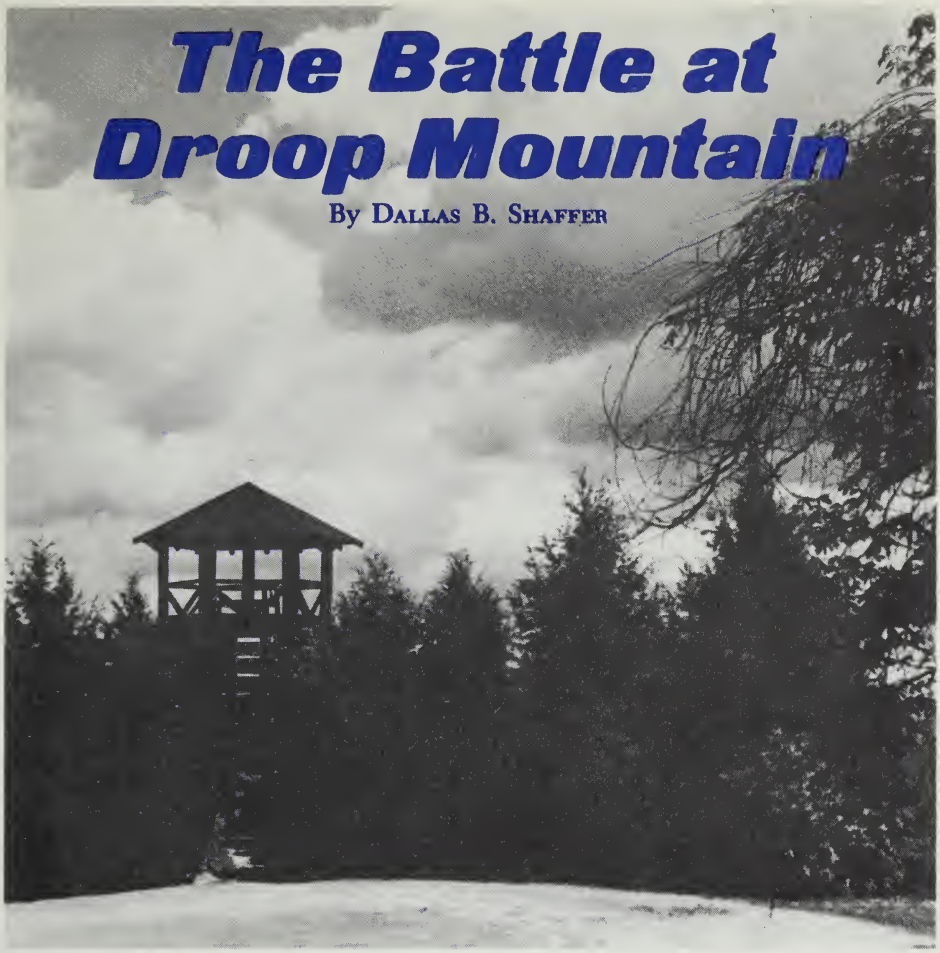
General John Echols

The South



The Battle at Droop Mountain

By Dallas B. Shaffer



This is the lookout tower at Droop Mountain Battlefield State Park. The observer can see the town of Hillsboro in the valley and visualize the route taken by Federal troops in reaching the mountain entrenchments of the Confederates.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dallas B. Shaffer is now a member of the faculty at Fairmont State College, where he teaches history. At the time this booklet was prepared he was working toward his doctoral degree in the field of history at West Virginia University, while working part-time as historian for the Conservation Commission, now the Department of Natural Resources.

Shaffer's other published work consists of a 12-page booklet, The Battle of Carnifix Ferry. Coupled with the work on Droop Mountain the booklets present a two-part series on two major Civil War battles in West Virginia.

These two booklets are intended to serve as authoritative works on the two battles, portraying accurately the events which took place in the struggle between the Union and the Confederacy. Shaffer studied official records in Washington for much of his information.

The Best Laid Plans . . .

IN SEPTEMBER OF 1863 the Federals were defeated at the Battle of Chickamauga and were being pressed westward by the Confederates. Commanding the Confederate Department of Western Virginia and East Tennessee with headquarters at Dublin, Virginia, General Sam Jones moved with a large part of his forces to join in pushing the Federals from Tennessee. The Union General-in-Chief, H. W. Halleck, sought to relieve the pressure on the Federals by sending cavalry units from West Virginia to sever the vital Virginia and Tennessee Railroad in the vicinity of Lynchburg. By this move Halleck hoped to force Jones to withdraw from East Tennessee to protect the railroad which connected the armies in Virginia and Tennessee. Soon after the battle of Chickamauga, Halleck presented this plan to the commander of the Department of West Virginia, Brigadier General Benjamin F. Kelley.

Kelley was the former commander of the First (West) Virginia Regiment and leader of the forces which wrested Philippi from the Confederates on June 3, 1861, the first land battle of the first campaign of the Civil War. Kelley survived the wound he received in the chest during that engagement to become commander of the Federal forces in West Virginia, following such notables as General George B. McClellan, General William S. Rosecrans, whose career was closed by the Battle of Chickamauga, and General John C. Fremont. Kelley placed the 32,000 troops of his command at strategic points throughout West Virginia, which had been admitted to the Union by Lincoln's proclamation in June of 1863.

The protection of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad was Kelley's chief responsibility. The Eleventh and Twelfth Corps were transferred by the B&O on this occasion from the Washington area to reinforce the Federals in Tennessee. To protect the railroad Kelley posted heavy contingents of troops at points from his headquarters at Clarksburg to Harpers Ferry in the Eastern Panhandle. A veteran of Civil War campaigns in West Virginia, General E. P. Scammon commanded some 6,000 troops concentrated at Charleston. Another contingent of some 5,000 troops under General William W. Averell was located in Randolph County with headquarters at Beverly, a little town some 15 miles south of Leadsville (Elkins) on the historic Parkersburg and Staunton Turnpike. General Kelley assigned the defenses of central and southeastern West Virginia to Generals Scammon and Averell.

Under command of General Sam Jones, the Confederates in West Virginia were located at points along the Alleghanies from Princeton to Mill Point, some 34 miles north of Lewisburg. With headquarters at Mill Point, Colonel H. R. Jackson's command was rather widely distributed in the surrounding area. General John Echols' brigade was at Lewisburg, while Colonel M. J. Ferguson held in readiness the Fourteenth and Sixteenth Virginia Cavalry. Under Lee's orders, Brigadier General John Imboden was encamped near Bridgewater east of Beverly. Maintaining pressure on the Federals in this area and trying to occupy as many of the enemy as possible, Imboden's primary objective was to strike the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad at the earliest opportunity to prevent its being used to transport troops to Tennessee.

Kelley informed General Halleck that part of the Confederates had been withdrawn from West Virginia and that the offensive against the Virginia and Tennessee would be launched from Beverly. According to Kelley's plan as disclosed to Halleck, Averell was to move to Lewisburg, while another column was to leave Charleston to arrive there at the same time. As the two arms of this pincer movement con-

General Kelley

verged upon Lewisburg, Kelley hoped that the Confederates in Greenbrier, Pocahontas, and Monroe counties would be driven out or trapped between the two. At Lewisburg, General Averell was to determine if circumstances warranted the completion of his drive to sever the Virginia and Tennessee. With Halleck's concurrence, Kelley issued the appropriate orders to Averell and left his headquarters to coordinate the movement from Charleston.

Kelley had good reason to entrust such a hazardous movement behind Confederate lines to General Averell. This twenty-nine-year-old cavalry officer had earned a reputation as an Indian fighter following his graduation from West Point. Already Averell had distinguished himself in many battles in the Civil War. He was with McClellan during the abortive Peninsular Campaign, later participating in the bloody affair at Fredericksburg in December, 1862. Averell's transfer to West Virginia in May of 1863, and his vigorous attempts to cope with the guerrilla bands and Confederate raids further enhanced his reputation.

Soon after Averell arrived in West Virginia, many infantry units were converted to "mounted infantry" regiments. The mounted infantry regiments were an innovation designed particularly to cope with the guerrilla forays and embarrassing Confederate raids which had destroyed oil and other properties, as well as crippled the Baltimore and Ohio. A delegation from West Virginia visited Lincoln in February of 1863 to request this change from foot to horse. Following Lincoln's intercession with Halleck this request was granted. The mounted infantry units were mobile and could cope with Confederate cavalry raids—reverting to normal infantry tactics when confronting an entrenched position.

As the Federal cavalry advanced against the Confederates in eastern Tennessee, Averell left Beverly on November 1 with orders to arrive in Lewisburg on Saturday, November 7 (at "two p.m."). Averell's command consisted of the Second, Third, and Eighth West Virginia Mounted Regiments, the Tenth West Virginia Infantry, two batteries of the First West Virginia Light Artillery, the Twenty-Eighth Ohio Infantry, the Fourteenth Pennsylvania Cavalry, and Major Thomas Gibson's (Pennsylvania) Independent Cavalry Battalion. As the citizens of Beverly observed the departure of the Federals, they were perhaps reminded of General George B. McClellan's feat at the battle at Rich Mountain some two years earlier. Perhaps Averell could imitate his former commander's successes in West Virginia!

The column which left Charleston two days later was commanded by General Alfred N. Duffie, a regular army officer. The Second West Virginia Cavalry, the Thirty-Fourth Ohio Mounted Infantry, and an artillery battery, a total of some 1,000 men, were in this column. Duffie proceeded eastward over the Lewisburg pike until he halted on November 6 fifteen miles west of Lewisburg at Meadow Bluff. Preoccupied with Averell's advance, the Confederates were unaware of Duffie's movements until he contacted the outposts at Meadow Bluff.

The first obstacle encountered by Averell was Jackson's command at Mill Point. At Mill Point Jackson's headquarters were protected by part of the Nineteenth Virginia Cavalry and an artillery battery. The remainder of the Nineteenth had been sent into Nicholas County on an expedition. At Marlings Bottom (Marlinton) Jackson had stationed the Twentieth Virginia Cavalry, while other detachments were located at Dunmore and Edray.

Mill Point

LEARNING OF AVERELL'S advance upon Huntersville, Jackson concentrated his command at Mill Point. While drawing in his forces, Jackson sent a message to General Echols at Lewisburg informing him of the enemy movements and his intention to give them battle. Echols replied that he would immediately move to his support.

Jackson ordered Colonel William W. Arnett to return with the Twentieth Virginia from Marlinton, some eight miles north of Mill Point. Captain Marshall's detachment returned from Edray, while Lt. George W. Siple, commanding a company at Dunmore, was ordered to make a reconnaissance to determine the Federal strength and disposition. For some time Siple was isolated in Pocahontas County by the rapid movements of Averell's column. Colonel William P. Thompson, with the Nineteenth in Nicholas County, returned just in time to prevent the Third West Virginia Mounted from cutting off Arnett's retreat from Marlinton.

Far into the night, Jackson was busily aligning his troops and preparing for the impending struggle. He placed Arnett in command of all infantry and ordered him to station them by detachments in defensible positions along Stamping Creek. Captain Lurty's two artillery pieces were placed on a hill south of the village. The following morning Averell's advance units probed Jackson's position.

The stillness of the remote little town was rudely disrupted that morning by the small arms fire of Federal skirmishers and sharpshooters moving against Mill Point. Soon Lurty's two 12-pound howitzers opened fire upon the main force of the Federals, forcing them to withdraw to a sheltered position. For some time the Confederate artillery held the Federals at bay.

Averell's advance units confronting Jackson were commanded by Colonel James N. Schoonmaker of the Fourteenth Pennsylvania. Schoonmaker was supported by the Third West Virginia, which had rejoined him after failing to trap the Twentieth Virginia at Marlinton. The Third had moved from Huntersville over the road toward Cackleytown, when the timely arrival of the Nineteenth from Nicholas County permitted the Twentieth to escape to Mill Point. Upon the withdrawal of the Confederates from Marlinton, other units of Averell's column occupied the town.

Suspecting that reinforcements were moving to aid Schoonmaker, Jackson sent out a reconnaissance party of thirty men under Captain L. R. Exline. Driving in the Federal pickets and retrieving all of his men safely, Exline returned to report that artillery and cavalry reinforcements were joining Schoonmaker. Aware that he could not hold his position against the superior fire power and long range of the Federal artillery, Jackson prepared his troops to retreat when the batteries opened against him.

Schoonmaker was reinforced by the Eighth West Virginia and Captain C. T. Ewing's battery of the First West Virginia

Light Artillery. Leaving Marlinton about dawn, these units had hastened to Schoonmaker's support when Jackson's batteries announced the battle had begun. Dismounting the cavalry, Schoonmaker dispatched Colonel Oley with his Eighth and the Fourteenth against the Confederate right. Placing the artillery on the summit of the hill to the center, he sent the Second and Third West Virginia to support the artillery and to move against the Confederate left. As Ewing's artillery opened fire, Schoonmaker ordered a general advance upon Jackson's position.

Colonel Jackson could hold his line for only a few minutes under the heavy cannon fire and musketry, and about eleven o'clock the Confederates began to withdraw. With the Nineteenth Cavalry, Colonel Thompson checked the Union charge until the infantry and artillery could escape. Sending the major party of the Nineteenth with the Confederate rearguard, Thompson remained with two officers and 30 men to hold a hill under a shower of shell and grapeshot while the infantry moved out safely.

Thompson retired slowly while delaying the Federal pursuit as much as possible. As the Federal artillery lobbed shells to burst overhead and near their ranks, the Confederates rètreated under cover of hills and through timber wherever possible. The long Confederate column finally retreated the seven miles from Mill Point, through a beautiful cleared valley to Droop Mountain. The first encounter of this campaign proved to be merely a delaying action, but Jackson had a position in mind against which Averell would find a movement more difficult.

General Averell arrived at Mill Point with two infantry regiments just as the Confederates began to retreat. Within 34 miles of his objective, Lewisburg, Averell avoided pressing the Confederates too closely, attempting to keep them as far from Lewisburg as possible. Averell's advance followed the Confederates through Hillsboro, but they were never closer than 200 yards from their rearguard.

Attempting to cut the Nineteenth Virginia from the main Confederate column, Averell sent three mounted regiments to flank the column. When the Nineteenth arrived at the base of Droop Mountain about three that afternoon, it was confronted by these mounted regiments. The isolation of the Nineteenth was prevented by some well directed shells from Lurty's battery which forced the Union regiments to withdraw.

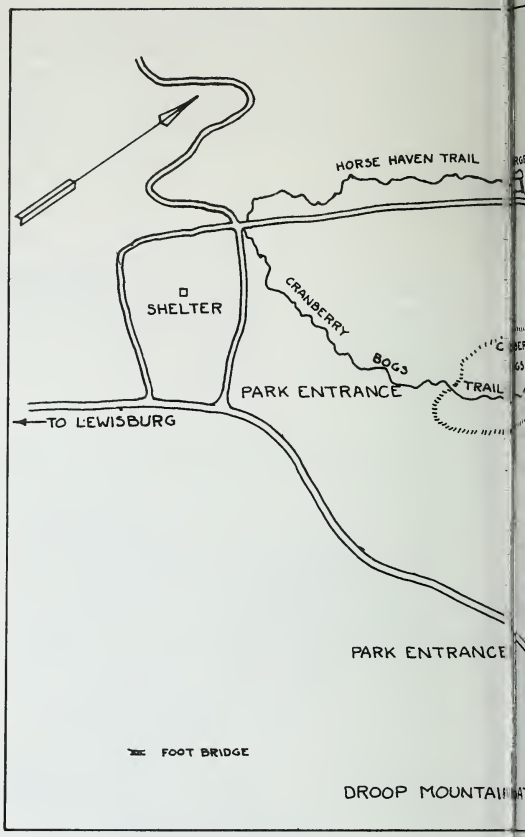
Droop Mountain

JACKSON'S EXHAUSTED troops arrived at the summit of Droop Mountain late in the evening and immediately began the placement of artillery. Jackson disposed his units to block the main road to Lewisburg which then extended across the mountain. The northern slope of Droop Mountain was partially cultivated, and strips of woodland somewhat concealed the approach from the pike. To gain this position the Federals would have to move over low-rolling hills and across difficult ravines to attack from any direction.

The crest of the mountain was densely covered with laurel and undergrowth, and from this naturally fortified position Jackson could observe the Union forces about Hillsboro some two miles distant and the plain known as Little Levels below his position. Form his camp near Hillsboro, Averell faced the great obstacle presented by the steep mountain. His advance would have to proceed through the open fields and over the pike in the face of Confederate artillery.

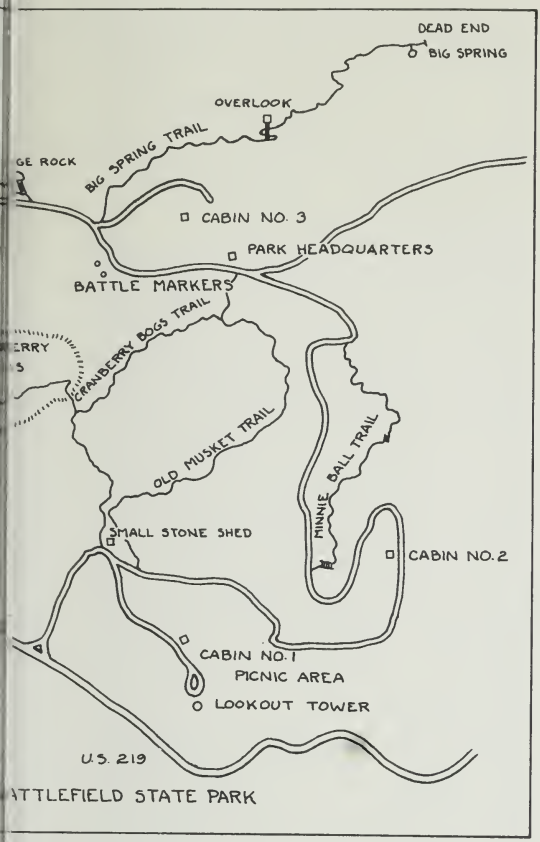
Jackson constructed temporary fortifications to meet the attack expected to come the following morning. Arnett was assigned the center position overlooking the pike. His Twentieth Virginia spent the night and part of the next morning constructing breastworks of logs, stone, and earth. Jackson placed Lurty's howitzers on a projecting spur commanding the frontal approaches.

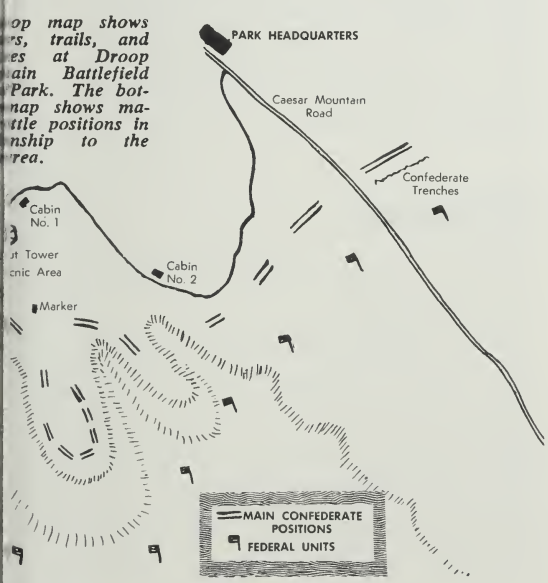
Including the Nineteenth on picket duty at the front, Jackson hoped to hold this position with about 750 men against Averell's estimated strength of 3,500 until the arrival of General Echols. Some of Jackson's troops were posted to guard the Locust Creek Road while some were still cut off in Pocahontas County. While his fortifications were being constructed, Jackson sent another dispatch to Echols. In this dispatch he misinformed Echols concerning Averell's strength, based on faulty reports of his scouts. General Echols was advised of the impending battle and requested to come immediately to his support.



By this time Echols had moved his brigade about halfway to Droop Mountain. Having departed from Lewisburg about nine o'clock that morning, November 5, Echols had advanced to within fourteen miles of Jackson's position and encamped for the night. Receiving Jackson's urgent pleas for help, Echols moved the remaining distance to arrive at Droop Mountain about nine o'clock the following morning.

Before leaving Lewisburg, Echols dispatched the Sixteenth Regiment and part of the Fourteenth to Meadow Bluff to guard





op map shows rs, trails, and es at Droop ain Battlefield Park. The bot- nap shows ma- ttle positions in nship to the rea.

the approaches and to picket the roads from Kanawha and Nicholas counties. Major James Nounnan, commanding the Sixteenth, was placed near Bunger's Mill at Meadow Bluff. A squadron of the Fourteenth under Captain James A. Strain took a position on the road leading from Nicholas County. Echols soon realized the wisdom of protecting himself against a drive to his rear which would have put his command in a compromising position.

The remainder of the Fourteenth Virginia Cavalry arrived at Jackson's position that night. Jackson placed two companies of the Fourteenth on the extreme left to protect the rear and left flank, while the other companies reinforced Arnett's Twentieth Virginia at the center. When Echols arrived and assumed command of the position the following morning, the Confederates at Droop Mountain enthusiastically threw down the gauntlet to the Federals confronting them. The reinforcements were greeted by the music of the band, as battle flags were unfurled and the Confederate cheers announced their arrival to the Federal commander preparing the assault.

Approving Jackson's disposition of the troops, Echols took further measures to protect the vulnerable flanks. The Twenty-Sixth Battalion under Colonel George M. Edgar was dispatched with one artillery piece to guard the old road from Hillsboro to Falling Spring, a road by which Averell might have moved southeast to cut off Echols from the rear. One rifle piece from Chapman's battery was later detached and sent to Edgar.

The Twenty-Third Battalion Virginia Infantry was placed on the right of the main road. Company C was placed on picket duty to the rear, while companies A and F were deployed as skirmishers before the battalion. This unit was located about 400 yards to the right of the batteries. The Twenty-Second Virginia was placed in the rear of the batteries for their support. Assigning immediate command of his brigade to Colonel George S. Patton, Echols assumed personal supervision of the right wing of the line. Jackson remained at the

center of the line with Colonels Arnett and Cochran of the Fourteenth and Twentieth Virginia. Colonel Thompson was entrusted with the defense of the left flank with the Nineteenth Virginia.

Echols assigned the disposition of the artillery to Major William McLaughlin of the Confederate artillery branch. McLaughlin placed the batteries of Chapman and Jackson to support the infantry. Jackson's two artillery pieces, one a parrott gun, were placed with Lurty's battery. This unit was temporarily assigned to Echols from Jenkin's cavalry brigade. Chapman's battery, commanded by Captain George B. Chapman, a twenty-two-year-old Monroe County youth, was without two of its artillery pieces which had been left behind for repairs at the Dublin ordinance depot. His battery of four guns consisted of two howitzers (a 12-pounder and a 24-pounder), a rifled piece and a brass howitzer. His battery was placed in a position to the rear on a hill in easy supporting distance of the infantry.

The most vulnerable point in the Confederate lines was the left flank defended by the Nineteenth. Its collapse would allow a Federal advance to the rear of the entire position. Early that morning Thompson sent 25 men under Lieutenants Mark V. Jarrett and William W. Boggs to relieve the two companies of the Fourteenth stationed there the previous night. Before the arrival of Echols, Jackson had ordered Thompson to reinforce that point. Thompson then sent another 100 men to the left under Captain J. W. Marshall, with orders to dismount the men and send the horses to the rear. Jackson's anxiety over the left flank soon induced him to send the remainder of the Nineteenth there with Colonel Thompson.

Having been misinformed by Jackson's underestimating Averell's strength, Echols was confident in his ability to hold his position. Engagements in this theater during the past few months had been encouraging for the Confederates. Unaware of the menace posed by General Duffie's advance from Charleston, General Echols felt prepared for the worst.

Averell Attacks

AS DAWN BROKE on the morning of November 6 Averell was busily arranging his units for battle. Averell first sent out three infantry companies to probe the Confederate position. The skirmishing attack proved the position to be too strong to make a frontal attack practical, whereupon Averell decided to send a detachment far to the west to outflank the Confederates and to fall upon their left. While this flanking movement was in progress, Averell sent other units and artillery to move against the right and center to divert the attention of the Confederates.

Averell assigned the flanking movement to a veteran of campaigns in West Virginia who had proved his abilities in many similar operations, Colonel Augustus Moor, commander of the Twenty-Eighth Ohio Infantry. Moor was supported by the Tenth West Virginia and Captain Julius Jaehae's company of the Fourteenth Pennsylvania Cavalry. Leaving camp about nine that morning,

Moor led his company some four miles in a northwesterly direction with the aid of a local guide. He then turned due south for about an hour, having marched some nine miles in a semicircle to a point near the Confederate left without having been detected. Shortly after noon his advance contacted Confederate skirmishers. Guided by the sounds of gunfire at the Confederate camp, Moor continued to advance upon the left flank.

Meanwhile, Averell directed units to move against the Confederate right and center. Colonel Schoonmaker led the Fourteenth and Keeper's battery against the Confederate right. Driving the Confederate skirmishers before him, Schoonmaker placed his artillery in position about two-thirds of a mile from the lines. The battle was joined about eleven o'clock that morning when the Confederate artillery opened up on Schoonmaker's battery, which directed its fire toward the Confederate center.

Schoonmaker's artillery fire fell among the horses and Confederate batteries. Jackson, Lurty, and one piece of Chapman's battery returned the fire in this duel which lasted about a half hour. Directed some 500 feet below them, the Confederate fire was accurate and forced the Federal artillery to withdraw. The Confederate artillery continued to shell the Federal infantry and cavalry whenever a target was exposed. Fearing that the Confederates, if not pressed continuously, would detect Moor's flanking movement, Schoonmaker moved his artillery from the right toward the center of the line. He managed to fire several telling rounds before he was again forced to change position by the heavy Confederate artillery fire. About one o'clock the three pieces of Federal artillery firing upon the Confederate center were again forced to withdraw by Jackson's battery and Chapman's rifled piece. In the meantime two artillery pieces were advanced up the road and opened up on the Twenty-Second Virginia to the left of Chapman, only to be silenced and driven away by Chapman's and Lurty's batteries.

About 1:45 General Averell decided, by the sounds of heavy fighting on the left flank, that Colonel Moor had engaged the Confederates and that the time for the frontal assault was at hand. Averell then ordered the attack to commence upon the center. Leaving one company of the Second to guard the horses of the mounted infantry, the Second, Third, and Eighth West Virginia regiments attacked. After an hour of hard fighting, exposed at times to the

Confederate artillery, the three regiments moved up the mountain and gained a position within fifty yards of the line in front of the Confederate center and batteries. The Confederates repulsed the first charge and the Federals fell back to regroup for a renewed assault. In the meantime the Confederate commander had weakened the center to reinforce the left flank which was wavering and threatened to collapse.

On the left flank the Confederates were sheltered by timber while the Federals advanced in line of battle through heavy undergrowth. Colonel Thompson was vainly struggling to resist the overwhelming numbers of Federals under Colonel Moor with the Twenty-Eighth and the Tenth West Virginia. To prevent being outflanked, which was constantly attempted, Thompson

had extended his line much farther than his strength would warrant.

Colonel Moor's advance skirmishers had been joined by three companies of the Twenty-Eighth when they arrived in front of Thompson's position and were confronted by a hedge constructed of logs and brush. The Twenty-Eighth moved forward in line of battle as Colonel Harris brought up the Tenth West Virginia just in time. Trees and undergrowth limited their view to about twenty-five or thirty yards and the Confederates allowed them to approach within that distance before opening fire. Rising with a "Rebel" yell, the Confederates greeted the Twenty-Eighth with a deadly fire and charged the wavering line. This was the critical moment for the Federals and Colonel Moor saved the day by ordering his regiment to hit the ground and fire by file. The sudden disappearance of the regiment and the increased fire through the underbrush checked the Confederate charge. Having some difficulty in bringing up his regiment through the cavalry horses and confusion, Colonel Harris arrived just in time to hold the line. The Tenth took a position on the right of the Twenty-Eighth as the assault was renewed.

Erroneously informed that the Federals were trying to gain the rear by a more circuitous route than actually taken by Moor, Colonel Thompson had moved far to the extreme left. When the firing began, Thompson realized his error and returned quickly to reinforce Captain Marshall. It was at this point that the Confederates charged and drove the Federal skirmishers back to their main body. Thompson then sent a request for reinforcements to Colonel Jackson at the center. The Union troops pushed the Confederates back and forced their line to give way gradually. Quite a number of the Confederates were unnerved by the overwhelming odds, and knowing the importance of holding this flank, Thompson repeatedly tried to rally his troops.

The Confederates stubbornly defended the left flank against the heavy force of Federals and made several desperate attempts to break the strength of the drive, fully aware that the loss of this flank meant the loss of the battle. As often as they took a stand, the Confederates were driven back until Thompson was reinforced by companies A, E, and I of the Twenty-Second Virginia and an additional company of dismounted Fourteenth Cavalry. Realizing their advantage in numbers, the Federals pressed vigorously against the wavering line. Thompson deployed the two companies of the Fourteenth to the left of his line where the Federals were making their strongest assault.

Although General Echols was aware that the center and right were heavily engaged, he knew that he must reinforce the left flank to prevent being encircled. He ordered Major Blessing to move his Twenty-Third Battalion from the center to the left flank. With six companies, numbering about 300 men, Blessing deployed his troops to the right of Captain Marshall and led his battalion in a charge, driving the Federals back before he was checked by a heavy volley of musketry. The Confederates were then forced back to a fence running parallel to the lines which they held for a short while.

Within 300 yards of the turnpike, Thompson was facing the Union lines some 20 yards away. He failed to rally the Twenty-Third Battalion and detachments of the Fourteenth which were giving way in some confusion. Echols observed the renewed assault on his center and right as the left was falling back; at this time the fighting was heavy along the entire line. As a last measure Echols sent Colonel Patton with the remainder of the Twentieth to support Thompson, but Patton soon informed Echols that the Confederates were hopelessly outnumbered and that the left flank was on the verge of collapse.

At the same time the Second, Third, and Eighth West Virginia pressed toward the center to join the left segment of Colonel Moor's detachment of some 1,175 men. At the time the Federals on the right were not pressing, and Echols went to the center to help Jackson rally the men to resist the attacking infantry. At Jackson's suggestion

the artillery began to move to the rear. The center held for a half-hour longer when Echols ordered the Confederates to fall back because the left was giving way. Jackson remained at the center until the last two artillery pieces were withdrawn. Major McLaughlin perhaps prevented the capture of Echols' entire command by keeping the artillery in action which checked the Federal advance until the troops withdrew.

The left flank finally gave way completely to Moor's repeated charges. Detailing one company of the Twenty-Eighth and one of the Tenth to march in the rear as a small reserve and to guard his flanks, Moor ordered the final Federal charge against the left flank. With cheers completely drowning out the Rebel yells, the Union infantry pressed forward until the left was forced back to the hill where the Confederate artillery was stationed. The artillery had just begun to withdraw, and at this time, the Eighth joined Moor's left. Then a wild scene ensued — the Union troops maintained a constant fire into the retreating Confederates, killing and wounding artillery horses, while Confederate officers vainly urged their men to make another stand. Confederate infantrymen were dispersed by their own cavalry as the officers drove cannon and caissons through the confused ranks.

Within a few minutes the Confederates had faded from sight into the woods south of the turnpike. When Moor's right wing came up to the pike, no Confederates remained but the dead and wounded. Farther up the pike a part of Moor's detachment fired at two rapidly moving spring wagons and killed both horses. They captured the wagons and found them loaded with wounded Confederates. As Averell arrived the Twenty-Eighth was ordered to pursue the Confederates.

The sudden collapse of the Confederates lines, accompanied by heavy Federal artillery shelling and strong infantry charges made an orderly retreat almost impossible. The Twenty-Sixth, guarding the Locust Creek Road, was cut off by Averell's rapid movements, but they later rejoined the main body. Echols withdrawal from the position at Droop Mountain, begun about four o'clock that afternoon, saved his command from Averell's trap.

Averell arrived at the camp just as the Confederates were withdrawing. Assigning details to care for the wounded and dead, Averell brought up the horses of the dismounted cavalry. Gibson's Battalion, Ewing's Battery, the Second, Third, and Eighth West Virginia, with the Fourteenth Pennsylvania pursued the Confederates some seven or eight miles until they were halted by the darkness. Federal cavalry continued to harass the Confederate rearguard, to be checked temporarily on one occasion by a Confederate countercharge.

A free copy of the first publication in this series, "The Battle of Carnifix Ferry," may be obtained free on request to the Department of Natural Resources, Public Relations Division, Charleston 5.

Soon after his escape from Droop Mountain, Echols learned of a greater and perhaps more dangerous trap confronting him. From Meadow Bluff a messenger informed him of the Federal column under General Duffie, estimated to be over 2,000 strong, which was rapidly advancing toward Lewisburg. The Confederates at Droop Mountain numbered about 2,000 men, while Echols estimated Averell's strength at about 7,000.

Still some 28 miles from Lewisburg, Averell hoped to keep the Confederates from returning there too quickly. If the Confederates moved too slowly, Echols might be trapped by Duffie who was scheduled to arrive in Lewisburg the following day. Descending the mountain the following morning, Averell's hopes were boosted by the sight of several camp fires to the east which indicated that the Confederates were somewhat dispersed. If they took time to regroup before continuing southward, the best-laid plans might be realized.

Objective Denied

GENERAL ECHOLS conducted the retreating Confederate column over the four miles of narrow road on Droop Mountain, while Colonels Jackson and Ferguson defended the rear against the continuing Federal cavalry attacks. Colonel Patton returned to the rear in a futile attempt to rally the men and restore order. Unnerved by the ordeal of battle and the Federal cavalry and artillery closely pursuing them, many Confederates dropped from the ranks to escape into the woods, most of whom rejoined the main body later. Unable to repair a broken-down carriage, the Confederates abandoned and partially concealed a brass cannon with brush, which was later recovered by the Federals.

At Frankford the Confederate commander allowed his troops two hours to eat and rest after the gruelling marches and fighting of the past two days. After the units were regrouped and order was restored, Echols continued the retreat southward through Lewisburg, crossed the Greenbrier River before dawn, and proceeded through Monroe County, from which many of his troops were enlisted. Echols led his troops as far south as Sinking Creek, in Giles County.

General Duffie entered Lewisburg about nine o'clock on the morning of November 7. Sending the Second West Virginia Cavalry to follow the Confederates closely, Duffie led his entire column in pursuit. Before he was stopped by a burned bridge, Duffie succeeded in capturing a few prisoners, along with over 100 cattle and two caissons. Duffie returned to Lewisburg where he destroyed large quantities of Confederate commissary and ordnance stores, tents and the knapsacks of the Twenty-Second Virginia. Averell entered Lewisburg that afternoon, and upon Duffie's arrival, ordered him to return the following day to Union where the Confederates were thought to have made a stand. Learning that Echols had retreated farther south and that he had been reinforced by the Thirty-Sixth Virginia from Princeton, Duffie again returned to Lewisburg. Averell then ordered him to return to Charleston at which point Duffie arrived four days later after having been delayed by a heavy snow storm.

Determining the drive against the Virginia and Tennessee to be impractical because of a shortage of rations and the condition of his troops, Averell moved eastward with his cavalry, mounted infantry, and Ewing's battery. With the Twenty-Eighth, Keeper's battery, and the Tenth West Virginia, Colonel Moor was ordered to return to Beverly with the prisoners and wounded.

Moving through White Sulphur Springs to a point near Callaghan, some five miles west of Covington, Virginia, Averell contacted General Imboden who had moved down to protect the Covington area. Unwilling to commit his diminished and exhausted command to a general engagement against Imboden, Averell swung northward over the Back Creek Road to Franklin. Part of his troops moved through Hightown, while the Fourteenth entered Monterey. At Petersburg, Averell halted his command for rations and forage, and on November 17 he arrived at New Creek (Keyser) with 27 prisoners, some 150 captured horses and several hundred cattle.

Casualties at Droop Mountain included 119 Union and an estimated 275 Confederates killed, wounded, and missing. Reports in the Wheeling Intelligencer indicate that over 150 Confederates were brought from this campaign and confined in the Athenaeum, a Federal prison at Wheeling. This battle, in which brothers and neighbors fought under opposing flags, represented civil war in its truest and most tragic form. The heaviest fighting occurred on the left flank where former neighbors in the Tenth West Virginia and the Nineteenth Virginia

met in the closest combat. While one brother fought against the Confederates on the left flank, another with the Twenty-Second Virginia defended the right.

Although a qualified success for Averell, the Battle of Droop Mountain might be considered a tactical victory for the Confederates, for Echols survived the main thrust of the Federal offensive and rendered Averell's command unable to complete the raid on the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad, his primary objective. Moreover, Echols managed to escape the closing arms of the pincer movement with his forces in the main unimpaired.

To some degree responsible for the creation of the State of West Virginia, Lincoln referred to Averell's victory at Droop Mountain to boost the sagging morale of the Federals in Tennessee who had recently been defeated at Rogersville by General Sam Jones. According to the Federal commander, General Burnside, the Droop Mountain victory greatly encouraged his troops. Although the departmental commander in West Virginia, General Kelley, informed Washington that all organized bodies of Confederates had been driven from the State, the Confederates returned within ten days to their former posts. Soon General Jones was on hand to inspect Echols' command, but the Confederates were unable to stop Averell's drive the following month when he succeeded in disrupting the vital railroad.

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